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ABSTRACT

Problems with assimilating foreign students into the French school system are addressed by examining some of the variables which are considered in dealing with nursery school age (2-6 years) migrant children. An explanation is given of the pre-school provisions for migrants and the general national policy of accepting them into the nursery schools in an effort to facilitate their integration into the French culture, while at the same time, trying to preserve their own cultural identities. Specific problems are discussed in the areas of discrimination, personnel, teaching methods, material environments, and communication with parents. Psycho-Pedagogic Aid Groups (groups of school psychologists and re-educators) are discussed in terms of their effectiveness in detecting and dealing with various handicaps which influence the development of the pre-school migrant children and their adaptation to school life. The existing lack of co-ordination between social services available to migrants is seen as a problem which should be addressed through cooperation of total communities and school systems. A list is included of five experiments which have concerned nursery school problems. (JD)

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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EDUCATION & CULTURE

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# FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS' CHILDREN INTO PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN FRANCE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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## A. Situation of pre-school provision for migrants' children up to the age of compulsory schooling

In principle, the children of migrant workers are accepted in all establishments which take children from birth to 6 years old. In general, less of them attend these establishments than French children, if only because few foreign mothers go to work. An exception must be made for the nursery school, which is entirely free and is fully integrated into the French educational system.

Among these establishments only the kindergarten and the nursery school have an explicitly educational purpose and can be described as "pre-school" establishments, although the day nursery, a type of establishment still rare in France, is beginning to become increasingly aware of the important educational role that it can play in the development of the young child.

The purpose of the kindergarten, which comes under the Health Ministry, is to look after, during the day, healthy children aged from at least 3 up to 6 years and to develop their physical and mental capacities by means of exercises and games. These establishments, of which there are very few, are run by the state (4), departments or municipalities, social security, family allowance funds and private enterprises or associations. The statistics, published by the Health Ministry in October 1975 show, as on 1 January 1974:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of establishments | 179 |
| Number of places | 9,015 |

We do not know how many migrant workers' children attend these establishments but we have every reason to believe that the number is negligible. That is why we do not propose to include the kindergarten in this study and shall only deal with nursery schools, which are by far the most numerous pre-school establishments in our country.

### Nursery schools and infant classes

These establishments, which come under the Ministry of Education, take children from at least 2 to 6 years old. Infant classes, usually to be found in rural districts, are nursery classes attached to a primary school, which take in children usually from 4 years old. Where the material conditions allow, they may also take them in at 2 years old.

When, for lack of room, all children cannot be admitted, priority is given to the older ones. In some cases priority is also given to the children of working mothers.

Statistics (provisional) of the Ministry of Education
September 1975

Number of children admitted:

| | Public sector | Private sector | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| All children | 2,239,787 | 351,355 | 2,591,142 |
| Foreign children | 180 to 185,000 = 8 to 8.2% | 9 to 10,000 = 2.6 to 2.9% | 190 to 195,000 = 7.3 to 7.5% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Number of nursery schools with several classes | 11,919 | 12,750 |
| Number of nursery schools with a single class | 831 | |
| Number of public nursery schools | 50,129 | 57,806 |
| Number of public infant classes | 7,677 | |

There are usually as many teachers as there are classes. The majority of nursery schools are small. If a school has more than 300 pupils, the headmistress need only teach classes part-time and if it has more than 400, she need do no teaching at all. There are consequently very few schools which have an additional teacher.

Wherever there is a psycho-pegagogical aid group (Groupe d'Aide Psycho-Pédagogique)(1), it assists the nursery school (in principle) as well as the elementary school. There are at present about 1,000 GAPPs at work, consisting of a psychologist and a re-educator in psycho-pedagogy. Half of them also have a re-educator in psycho-motricity.

B. General national policy towards pre-school provision for migrants' children

Immigration is not a new phenomenon in France. The percentage of foreigners was already high before the second world war.

Today, as in the past, the children of these families are admitted to all public schools in the country, including nursery schools, where they receive the same education as French children. In the past few years, however, two important new factors have changed the face of the problem. Firstly, immigrants come from more distant countries, where ways of living and culture are very different from ours; secondly, the fact that the immigration is often temporary no longer warrants a policy of assimilation.

As a result, while the objective of integrating these children into the French school system is maintained, special measures have been taken:

1. to facilitate such integration, which is often difficult;

2. to preserve the cultural identity of these children and facilitate their re-integration, if necessary, in the school system or occupational life of their country of origin.

These measures are still in process of development and do not yet meet all the requirements. They consist of:

- the creation of special classes in which the new arrivals spend a short period of adaptation and familiarisation with the language and in which children with difficulties receive support teaching. For the moment these classes only exist, generally speaking, at the elementary and secondary levels. It is believed that they are not necessary in the nursery school, which takes in children under 5 years of age, and that these classes would have to be three or four times more numerous in the elementary schools if the nursery schools did not admit the majority of children already established in France;

- lessons conducted by teachers from the country of origin, either outside classes or during normal class hours, for 3 hours a week; the latter system would appear to be the better for many reasons. So far this teaching in the national language is only given at elementary level although some immigration countries want it to begin in the nursery school;

- the extension to foreign students of national study grants at secondary level.

When foreign children attend a day nursery or enter a nursery school at a very early age (2 or 3 years old), their integration into the French school system is greatly facilitated. Unfortunately, in some localities lack of space makes it impossible to admit them so young. In that case it would be desirable to give priority to these children and to admit them at least on a part-time basis (that is to say 3 hours a day in the nursery school) when it is not possible to have them on a full-time basis.

These measures, which are purely administrative, cannot take full effect unless, at the same time,

1. teachers are made aware of the problems of migrant workers' children and are trained to cope with them;

2. research is carried out on the specific needs of these children and pedagogical methods are devised to meet them.

The Ministry of Education has begun to take action to achieve these objectives.

To sum up, present policy would appear to aim at avoiding assimilation pure and simple, which entails the loss of the original cultural values, or marginalisation which rejects these values, and to tend towards positive cultural assimilation, which implies the maintenance of essential values and the acquisition of complementary values, thanks to harmonious integration in a more open and more tolerant school system. We are still far from achieving this aim everywhere.

C. Special situation of migrants' children in pre-school education

So far very few studies have been carried out in France on the attendance of migrant workers' children at nursery school. It is true that the problems raised do not seem so acute as at the elementary or secondary level. The nursery school, which is accustomed to taking in very young children who can only speak imperfectly or not at all, has been less disturbed than the primary school by the massive influx of children who do not speak French. The nursery school has, traditionally, always given an important place to the acquisition of the language. Moreover, many of its activities do not depend on verbal exchanges and do not presuppose an understanding of verbal communication. Furthermore, the children who form its little community, because they are so young, have other means of communication more direct than speech. Finally, the absence of detailed curricula, a more comprehensive education and generally more flexible methods make it possible to avoid the tensions and anxieties caused by formal teaching divided into carefully organised subjects. By tradition, the nursery school knows how to wait and prefers to put trust in the small child who, with the malleability characteristic of his age, often overcomes his difficulties in spectacular fashion.

All these reasons, positive in themselves, have certainly contributed to the fact that this problem has so far been largely shelved. It is, however, to be feared that it has not been understood in its true dimensions and that because of the very malleability of the young child he had been allowed to bear too heavy a part of the responsibility in this process of adaptation, with the risk that the adaptation may be to his detriment even when it appears to be particularly successful.

We realise this danger when we look at the attitudes taken by the teachers to the problem. One of these attitudes may be roughly described as follows: foreign children are treated in the nursery school exactly like French children; they are happy there; they must learn the language as soon as possible and then there will be no problem and many of them succeed in this very well. Another, rarer, attitude is the following: it is very hard on these poor children to be uprooted; we feel very helpless and ask ourselves what we can do for them. In the first case, the French nursery school is not called in question and the child is expected to adapt; in the other case, it is the school which should adapt to the child. In both cases the teachers do their generous best to help the foreign children but these differences in the degree of awareness of the problem necessarily affect the amount of effort demanded of the child and the value of the educational

In examining the particular situation of foreign workers' children in the French nursery school, account must be taken of a number of variables (these are more fully treated in the appendices):

1. the social, economic and cultural level of the family;

2. the degree to which the family is integrated into the host environment;

3. knowledge of the mother tongue and how rich the language is;

4. whether the child is an older or younger child;

5. age at entry into the nursery school;

6. the amount of time spent at the nursery school;

7. the surrounding French milieu;

8. the diversity of the ethnic groups and how many there are of each;

9. how old the school is and the stability of the teaching staff;

10. the proportion of foreign children to the total number of pupils (see Appendix I).

When all these variables are taken into account, the problems are see to be extremely complex and difficult to deal with en bloc. With regard to the children, the most painful case is certainly that of the child whose family has just arrived, who is separated from his mother for the first time and is plunged brusquely into a totally different environment. Between this child and one who was born in France and belongs to a well-integrated family which is even perhaps in process of obtaining naturalisation, there are many differences in the degree of "strangeness" that may be felt on both sides and all these variations at the same time fluctuate, since we are dealing with malleable beings in full process of development, whose behaviour changes from week to week with sometimes astonishing rapidity.

In the face of this complex and mobile reality, the components of which are, more often than not, completely independent of the nursery school itself, what does the pre-school establishment in our country do and what can it do? What is there in the way it works that can or could exercise a positive influence? That is the main object of this study.

## C. I. The problem of equality

### 1. Creating the necessary effective situation

It is a striking fact that many teachers believe there is no difference between the emotional response of foreign children to the school and that of the French children. They obviously

think: "We adults make no distinction; we treat all the children equally" and, by unconcious reasoning, they conclude that the differences do not exist.

Those with a less egocentric point of view observe in the foreign children a tendency to the following behaviour patterns:

- timid children, lacking initiative and assurance, always looking for support from the adult, remaining in a state of emotional dependence on the mistress, particularly sensitive to kindnesses, to signs of affection and to prohibitions;

- children who take longer to adapt, who remain reserved and have a tendency to be silent and isolated;

- very timid children who occasionally explode into violence or aggressive children or children continually distrustful and on the defensive;

- dejected children, unattractive to other children, who tend to reject them;

- children who do not obey the rules because they do not understand them.

Many teachers recognise that they have to give more attention to the foreign children so that they are not left out, and that the other children accept them. It is, however, generally agreed that there is no trace of racialism among pre-school-age children. Towards the age of 4 or 5, however, the prejudices of the parents begin to tell. So we sometimes find French children refusing to shake hands with foreign children or to sit beside them, and even calling them offensive names. When there is a large proportion of foreign children, the following reactions may be observed in some French parents:

- attempt to get their child into another school (public or private);

- forbidding their child to play with foreign children;

- when there is a shortage of places in the nursery school, foreign children are accused of taking the places of French children;

- stronger reactions when a foreign child is involved in a children's quarrel;

- foreign children are accused of bringing parasites into the school.

In general the children are not very conscious of ethnic differences, although they may be fascinated by physical traits. There is, however, one point on which all teachers place great emphasis: the only differences which are immediately perceived and strongly resented by the children are in cleanliness and clothing, whatever the child's nationality. It is probable that

the children are particularly sensitive on this point because they are aware of similar reactions in adults, even if the adults try not to show their feelings too much (evidence abounds - see Appendix II). The teachers in such cases hasten to give clothes and advice on hygiene, which are usually refused or badly taken, which makes them think that the parents are very "touchy".

In general, headmistresses think that the teachers in their schools are well aware of the problems which foreign children may encounter. But they usually only speak about the language problem or the care taken not to make any distinction between the children. When asked if they think that teachers are sufficiently well informed in these matters, some do not understand the question or admit that they are almost totally ignorant of the ways of life, customs, religion and culture of the immigrants. Rarer are those who deplore their inadequate knowledge of the particular problems of these families, of their past, their living conditions in France and the difficulties they meet with. Rarer still are the teachers who think themselves ignorant of the psychological particularities of the children of other countries or other races. Some confessions are significant: "When we have a child who for a whole year remains 'a stranger', we feel a certain inadequacy without being able to put our finger on what is lacking in our knowledge".

The attitude of the headmistress of the nursery school seems to be the deciding factor. Some remain quite passive in face of the problem. They are content to observe the phenomena. The nursery school, with its habits, its operation, its teaching methods, is to them something fixed and unchangeable and they complain about the difficulties caused by migrants' children: "We are discouraged when the child remains silent, cries without being able to explain why and seems not to understand what is going on in the class". "When the proportion of foreign children gets too high (33% in this case), the children do not listen to the story and it is discouraging to see our whole pedagogical system breaking down". "The majority of the children reject the North Africans; the mistresses and women helpers try to be kind" (25% of foreign children). One headmistress admits that "the staff is, alas, more conscious of the difficulties these children cause them than of the difficulties of the children themselves". Other headmistresses, however, take an active attitude, indeed a creative and enthusiastic one. They seem to tackle the problem with a will and, in certain respects, feel they have mastered the situation. They study the problems in the teachers' committee, discuss them before taking action, adopt common attitudes, organise the times at which particular help can be given to the children. As one of them says: "The whole team is mobilised for every new arrival". Some teachers help with the language courses given to parents.

When asked what are the children's greatest needs and the points on which most emphasis should be placed, many teachers speak of the assimilation of the child into the group: acceptance by the group and removal of awkward differences; getting to know about school habits and about clothes and food. They also believe that the child has great need

of security and affection when the family is a poor one and there are too many children. It is the education of the families which often seems to them to be most important. The following opinion well reflects this attitude: "In the nursery school these children are protected and put on an equal footing. They receive the same attention and the same welcome. The trouble comes outside the school (differences of race, language, religion etc)".

Other replies show that the needs of the child are beginning to be taken into consideration, independently of any comparison with the other children: for example, it is thought that great importance should be given to non-verbal expression, mainly those forms of expression for which these children are particularly gifted and in which they can excel straight away.

Far rarer are the replies which show total acceptance of the child as such and express his needs as he may feel them himself and not as they are attributed to him by others; which believe that the child should feel he is accepted for himself, that his originality (clothing, customs) should be admitted and made the most of, that he should be happy, should feel at ease, should feel his is loved and understood, that he should find someone who speaks his language, that his successes should be recognised, that he should keep his own personality, that he should be recognised as an individual and not as a "special case", that he should be given responsibilities which will help him to assert himself etc.

The "assimilatory" tendency, the belief that the best way of integrating the foreign child is that he be merged as soon as possible in the mass of French children, is an old and widespread pedagogic attitude. Traditionally, education is authoritarian and tends to standardisation; it considers its task to be to imbue children with the ways of thinking of the grown-ups in the surrounding society and to prepare them to enter into the existing social framework. The notion of respect of the child's personality is not very old and is still little applied, since the adults unconciously mould the children in their own image.

The presence of foreign children in the world of the school, which has so far been fairly uniform and thinks of itself as liberal, makes the general pedagogic problem more acute and may help to arouse a new awareness which will be beneficial to all children, both French and foreign. At a time when we are saying that children must be prepared for life in the world of tomorrow, of which it is difficult to know the form it will take, the tendency of educators is to think of changes within the context of the development of their own culture. And here we have to deal with children of whom we do not know in what country they will have to live, what working language they will have to use, whether, in the course of their lives, they may not have to live in several countries. Even if we re-think economic policies at international level, and do not admit migratory movements such as are now taking place owing to the inequalities of economic development, it is probable that

in the future population mobility will become greater (as is observed inside the same country), even if these movements are no longer in one direction only but are reciprocated.

With such prospects for the future, it is quite clear that education cannot continue to be based on a particular style of life and a given cultural content. To consider these children as "foreigners" without any knowledge of the French language, as, so to speak, socially handicapped children of a particular type, is to take a negative point of view, regarding them as lacking something in comparison with other children. Yet in a world in which people are increasingly on the move, in which communications are becoming ever more rapid, in which there are all kinds of migrations and cultural mixings, these children are in fact the pioneers of a new humanity, less rooted in a particular culture, less encased in a social milieu shut up within itself. They come to us with potential for a broader humanity. So long as their educators, parents or teachers, remain timidly enclosed within their own culture and try to trap the children, in turn, in one culture or the other, these children will have all the problems that come from being caught in the cross-fire of two worlds, problems which are sometimes even more acute because the two worlds may be opposed, even contradictory. Every child, considered in his whole being, has in him what is needed to give him access to all that is human. Education must no longer look on the child as a candidate for one culture or another but as a being endowed with potentialities that make him capable of realising in himself all forms of culture, even those still to be born. Instead of continuing to purvey a ready-made culture which pinions the individual in time and space, the education of the day can aim at the "culture" of man's potentialities so as to enable him to enter creatively into any particular culture without ever feeling himself totally shut in and so that he always remains open to the evolution and extension of the human experience. In this way education will create open-minded personalities instead of closed and restricted ones. From this point of view, one can see that even a successful adaptation may sometimes be an impoverishment and a limitation.

If, therefore, the migrant worker's small child is to find in the nursery school the emotional climate necessary for the development of all his potentialities in the very special situation in which he finds himself, then the milieu into which he enters must itself be very open. For this it is necessary that the teachers be better informed, and many of them want to be, but being informed is not enough in itself. It may sometimes only feed prejudices. One headmistress quotes this remark by a woman helper on a child: "He has tiny hands: you can see that he doesn't eat like us."

Only real, deep human contacts can create the right atmosphere. Some teachers would like to visit and study the home countries of their pupils, to make exchanges with the country's teachers, to live the life of the people of the country and even sometimes to learn their language or at least a few words of the child's vocabulary.

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It is above all contacts with the families that can help to create in the school an atmosphere which is less narrowly uni-cultural, one in which foreign children can find an echo of family gatherings, of their folklore, their culinary arts and of the objects and rites proper to their culture.

Finally, the authorities must take measures to reduce the size of classes, at present officially forty and often between 35 and 40, wherever there is a high proportion of foreign children. This should lead to a change in teaching methods and not just to making easier the use of methods which do not really meet the real needs of these children. For this reason, in addition to the reduction in the size of classes, the teachers in charge of them require better training.

2. Possibilities of creating an atmosphere of trust in educational establishments

The greatest difficulty felt by both parties in the relations between parents and teachers is the language barrier. Because of this barrier some foreign mothers never come to the school and have their children collected by older children or by neighbours. It also happens that they are afraid to show themselves because they have entered the country illicitly. The teachers complain that they cannot express what they want to say or ask for. Because of the hours of work, the teachers hardly ever see the fathers, who in general speak better French.

Although this is the most obvious difficulty, there are others which are not always so strongly felt by the teachers: different ideas on education and the development of the individual; distrust of the host environment; sometimes total ignorance of the role of the nursery school, which is confused with a day nursery; living conditions which make the migrants ill-at-ease in their contacts with the outside world, so that they retire into their shells.

However, the headmistresses of nursery schools believe generally that their relations with the foreign parents are good, but this often means only that they have no difficulties with them. Some think that the foreign parents are in general "easier" than some French parents.

Here we touch on a characteristic of the French school, where, in comparison with what happens in other countries, there is little place for the parent, although the nursery school is to some extent exceptional because the children go there accompanied by the family. Much is said of the social role of the nursery school, which it undoubtedly does fulfil, very often most devotedly. But this role is too frequently regarded as necessary to make up for certain deficiencies in the family, rather than as an education of the family and as a matter of reciprocal aid, since the school too can learn a great deal from the families.

The teachers remark that relations with the foreign families, sometimes difficult to begin with (parents on the defensive and distrustful), improve subsequently but often

remain at the mercy of the slightest incident (loss of a personal possession, a knock received from another child, a request made by the mistress) which can destroy the confidence that was thought to be well established, because of the revival of the parents' fear that their children are victims of racial prejudice or because the school does not come up to their expectations. As one headmistress says: "Some think that France is an Eldorado where everything is free and marvellous".

Those who have succeeded in establishing relations of real trust, say that these families show great attachment to the school, give presents to show their gratitude, come and talk about their problems and difficulties, seek advice, return to see teachers even when their youngest children have gone on to the primary school and write when they have returned to their home countries.

The way in which children are registered is not conducive to the rapid extablishment of this climate of trust. Often these families arrive to have their children registered on the very day on which the school re-opens. The headmistress, with her classes to attend to and with all the problems of the new term, has little time to devote to them. Moreover, if the school is overcrowded, there may well be no place for these children.

The abrupt entry of these children into the school, for which neither they nor their families have been prepared, is hardly conducive to their smooth integration, particularly at the beginning of the year when teachers are snowed under by the influx of new children not used to school life. The shock is bound to be severe. The child is not ready and nobody is ready to give him the help he needs.

The parents should have been informed by the reception services for foreigners, if possible before they come to France but, if not, immediately on arrival, on how the school system works and how the nursery school is organised and what are its educational aims.

The dates for registration with the nursery school often appear in the local papers, which the immigrants do not read. It is therefore important that they should be informed by some other means and that interpretation services should be available if needed. When the teachers have been at the school for some time and know the families, they are generally able to find interpreters. But what is important is that human contact should be made <u>immediately</u> between the school and the family. To this end registering the child must cease to be, as it so often is, a simple administrative formality. Sufficient time must be devoted to families who have not yet had a child registered with the school and the amount of time should be longer for a foreign family, whose confidence must be gained and who must find out about the environment into which their child is to enter and must establish solid links with the school.

The young teachers must learn to talk to the parents in a reassuring and friendly way:

1. Even if the parents do not speak French and an interpreter is present, the teachers must know that they have to address themselves to the parents; they must look at the parents when they speak (not at the interpreter), they must smile pleasantly and show affection to the child if it is present;

2. They must make discreet enquiries about living conditions, problems of health, work and accommodation and whether the families like the district;

3. They must not show surprise at the condition of the papers or at the names, should make no remarks on this subject, should take the papers and return them politely and naturally. This helps a great deal to reassure the parents. As some papers are very difficult to decipher, it is important that the teachers should have some knowledge of the national habits of patronyms;

4. The teachers should find out what the family calls their child. Since foreign names are not pronounced as they are read in French, it is very important that the parents should be asked to pronounce them several times; if necessary the mother's voice speaking her child's name should be recorded (this recording might incidentally help to calm the child down at a moment of distress). Whenever there is a French equivalent, the teachers should be advised to use it, rather than distort the child's name through bad pronounciation. For example, calling a "Fernando" Fernand gets much nearer to his real name, in which the last syllable is scarcely heard, than if it is pronounced in the French way with a strong stress on that syliable;

5. They must learn about all the problems or particularities concerning the child, its habits etc;

6. It is important to explain to the family all special requirements in regard to clothing and so on, and to do so in such a way that they feel that this advice is also given to French families;

7. To give informationon the participation of parents in the life of the school;

8. To organise visits to the school, show where the child will be etc;

9. Advise the family on how to prepare the child for going to school, possibly suggest that he stays in the restaurant or in the day nursery.

It is important to inform the teachers on the ways in which contacts are usually made among the immigrants. In some countries, in which verbal contacts are accompanied by extremely emotional gesticulation, a French handshake seems cold. And what if even this is not given!

It is important for teachers to discover that being unable to communicate verbally does not mean that they cannot communicate at all. The teacher must take no notice of any signs of panic or embarrassment, must go on talking, smiling, making friendly gestures and trying to make herself understood in other ways. As one headmistress of a nursery school says, "it is when the parents feel we want to make ourselves understood, we want to communicate, that we obtain their trust". The teachers must know that it is for them to meet the parents more than halfway and win their confidence.

It is desirable that the teachers should have translations in several languages of the rules, advice and hints which they want to communicate to the parents, but these documents are no substitute for personal contact. They may be handed over at the end of the conversation as an aide-mémoire.

Important as this initial contact is, it must be kept up throughout the year. In a school where all the teachers, including the headmistress, have charge of classes there is not much time for these contacts. It would therefore be desirable that an additional teacher should be able to take over from the headmistress or from a teacher whenever needed in all schools where the families have serious social problems and where there are many foreigners.

Contacts with the families may take a great variety of forms:

a. Several personal talks during the year on how the child is adapting himself, his behaviour in the school and in the family, his small personal problems etc;

b. A visit to the class with the children present or not, looking at their work etc;

c. Sending messages composed by the children or gifts of objects made by them;

d. Running a school journal or album;

e. Working together in the preparation of entertainments or the celebration of anniversaries (the foreign mother is proud to bake and offer the cakes of her country);

f. Taking part in recreational gatherings (school outing or journey, exhibition, fête, fancy dress dance etc);

g. Asking children to contribute packaging or salvaged material for manual work;

h. A toy-library or children's club. The teachers observe that the children of immigrants are often greatly attracted by the toys and games they find in the school and want to take them home. They could borrow them from the toy-library, knowing that they would have to bring the toy back in order to take away another one;

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i. Projection of slides or films, particularly when they are taken in the school, is a good method of contact, because they speak for themselves and the parents have the pleasure of recognising their children engaged in school activities and mixing with other children;

j. Taking part in discussion groups on a general topic, in information meetings, in accounts and discussion of particular cases etc. Whenever necessary one of the people present may be asked to translate for those who have difficulty in understanding and foreign parents would be invited to give their opinion on how the French educational system works;

k. Joining parents associations, which might include at least one foreign parent on their local committee;

l. Cultural exhanges may be organised on return from holidays in the emigrants' country, either by the teachers or by the emigrants themselves (an evening gathering in which views of the country are shown and stories told, folk music played or sung and information given on life in the country);

m. Exchanges between French and foreign mothers might also be organised: they would learn to prepare dishes from different countries or make handicraft;

n. Participation of teachers, as sometimes happens, in the language courses given to parents helps to strengthen links;

o. Although the size of the furniture in a nursery school is not suitable for organising courses for adults, the nursery school might initiate classes for mothers (cutting, sewing, cooking etc) given in the school group.

A climate of trust is created when the school ceases to be something mysterious and unknown, when the child and his family feel themselves to be an integral part of it and when they are fully accepted for themselves. In this way, the child is supported by the family in the process of adaptation. As some teachers observe, trust is solidly established when the parents feel that the school is really helping the child to develop his potentialities.

As the headmistresses of nursery schools often live in the school and the teachers in the neighbourhood, friendly contacts in the street also do much to encourage this climate of trust, as do the small services which the teachers can render (help in filling in tax returns, how to write out a cheque etc).

Whenever the headmistresses have succeeded in creating a very friendly atmosphere, in such difficult circumstances, they have found it an exhilarating social experience. Some of them describe with emotion how they have been invited to tea with an Algerian family.

Any action taken by the public authorities, firms, orgnisations and various mutual aid associations to improve the living conditions of these families and to help them to fit in with the host environment helps them to shake off their inhibitions, their inferiority complexes, their distrust and their fears and facilitates contacts with the educators of their children.

3. Special measures to improve the initial entry period

Entry into the nursery school is often the child's first separation from his mother. For some foreign children, who have lived through the trauma of immigration and have been separated from their mother for several months, this new separation may be equally painful, reviving old feelings of frustration.

As a general rule, the teachers believe that it is easier to admit the foreign child in the course of the school year, when the other children have learnt to help themselves. The large size of nursery classes makes it difficult to admit a big proportion of foreign children at the beginning of the year, particularly in the classes for the smaller children who are mostly going to school for the first time and all have moments of difficulty. The practice of staggering admissions through the early days of the school year to some extent mitigates these difficulties.

Whatever the case, it is desirable that the foreign child should have been prepared for this experience, that he should feel he is expected and that the people who receive him (in the classroom, in the restaurant, in the day nursery) are also prepared.

A child who has first visited the premises together with his mother, who has been prepared by her for the conquest of this marvellous place full of attractive things, who on arrival finds the mistress knows his name, has prepared a place for him and has perhaps some surprise gift, the child who feels he is being made much of, that even the puppets know his name, will feel less lost, less of a new boy. If he has been allowed to bring a toy, something given him by his mother, this object from a familiar world will keep him company, will be a comfort and will from the outset give him prestige in the eyes of the other children who will show their interest.

As soon as he arrives, the child needs to be taken in charge by the mistress, by the school's educational staff and by the children. It is often the foreign children who already know their way around who give a particular welcome to the newcomer. But the community of children more readily accepts a child whom the mistress and the other adults have shown interest in and made a fuss of.

The inevitable little accidents, due perhaps to the shortcomings in the habits of bodily or dietary hygiene of the families or to the awkwardness of the children in the strange surroundings, the signs of distaste for totally unfamiliar dishes must meet with all the understanding and indulgence of the adults. Their knowledge of a few words of the child's

What we must aim at is, as soon as possible, to overcome these behaviour problems in the child, which are too frequent and last too long, such as a refusal to go to the lavatory, to take off his clothes, to take a seat, to eat, to join in games, to let go his bag to which he clings fiercely, etc.

The essential thing is, straight away, to establish communication and an emotional link. It is very important for teachers to know how to get through to the children otherwise than by means of words. All young children possess a great many forms of communication: mimicry and facial play (a look, a smile), movements of the head, various gestures, signs, physical contact, caresses, oral noises, onomatopoeia or silence, sighs, grumblings, shouts, various movements and demeanours, laughter, attitudes and postures etc. The mistress must be sensitive to such signs, learn to detect them, know how to respond to them and to induce them. Even with a child who speaks the same language, contact is often achieved and trust often won by approaching the child gently, with a smile and a wink, by facial play and gesture, by cautiously trying out his reactions, whereas to start speaking abruptly may cause the child to freeze up or run away.

Particularly with very young children, physical contact is a means of communication and may establish a strong link. The foreign child must not be allowed to remain apart in the class or in the playground. Taking him by the hand and making him join in the game gives him security and is a way of bringing him physically into the group. When one feels that the tension is gone, that the child's hand is trustful, a great step has already been taken.

Communication is moreover not just an exchange of signs, by gesture or word. There are ways of communicating by action: giving, entrusting, lending, exchanging, handing over, sharing, showing, giving to understand, touching, gently teasing, even exchanging blows. This is what babies do before they can speak. Nor do we express ourselves with words only. We can do so with our whole body, with gesture, with graphic line or colour, through plastic activity, games etc.

If the teacher who receives the foreign child gives too much importance to words, she chooses a method of communication in which the child is momentarily handicapped and so puts the child at a disadvantage by showing up an inferiority of which he then becomes cruelly aware. The teacher should therefore, to begin with, speak as little as possible, using all the other forms of expression and calling on all the powers that are active in the child and immediately be mobilised, so that he is immersed in a varied world of communication to which he has immediate access.

The teachers insist on the importance of games for integrating the foreign child. Often it is in small play groups that the first spontaneous words are uttered. In the classroon, the play corners, often well equipped, have a strong

attraction. It is better to let the child play there than to oblige him to listen to a long story which he does not understand. But whenever he is included in a language activity, it is important that the mistress should do something to enable him to participate in one way or another.

It is often thought sufficient that the foreign child should be immersed in a "language bath". Classroom experience shows, however, that these children may also isolate themselves and get into the habit of not listening. But if the mistress takes care to place them near her when she is speaking, to look at them if necessary take them by the hand, they establish a physical relation with her which enables them to grasp "something" of what she is saying, if only a melodic line, a pleasant sounding word, the expression of a feeling. This is a way of penetrating the world of language.

Since children are particularly sensitive to the emotional inflections of the voice, the teachers must learn to create, through the subtle use of vocal intonation, an emotional climate conducive to communication. It is illogical that teachers, who constantly have to use their voices, should not, generally speaking, receive any training in this field. Thus many of them have no idea how to take advantage of this rich instrument and speak in a flat and monotonous way without any expression. For some years now teaching methods in the nursery school have been very much criticised in regard to communication: activities are carried out too collectively and many children never participate; more place is given to exchanges between mistress and children to the detriment of exchanges between the children themselves; too much importance is placed on the enrichment of vocabulary rather than on the acquisition of more complex morphological and syntatical structures.

Even if some children do not yet show any initiative in the use of words, they may nevertheless take great pleasure in participating in oral activities. Foreign children very quickly learn songs and rhymes. Teachers must therefore think of verbal games of all kinds which allow for the participation of all those children who have not yet acquired enough assurance and self-sufficiency to be more inventive.

We do not yet have in France systematic programmes for the development of language such as have been worked out in some countries for children from under-privileged families. The need for more methodical educational action is realised but we must not fall into the mistake of formal and systematic teaching which is not at all suitable to children of this age when everything is connected with play. Moreover, since we are dealing with children who are in contact with other languages, who, when they come into the school, are still learning their mother tongue, the approach to the problem must be largely diversified and uniformity avoided.

The often disappointing results obtained in other countries from such programmes are no doubt due to the fact that they are based on a negative attitude to these children, considered from the point of view of their social handicap. We should take into account the world of experience the foreign child has had before entering the nursery school and, in particular, the verbal experience he has acquired in learning his mother tongue. We must observe the way the child chooses to penetrate into the new linguistic world, what capacities he calls on to do so, so that we can give him support in his personal approach, while preserving his motivation.

Rather than a rigid programme for developing speech, nursery school teachers, who are at present entirely without resources, should be provided with:

1. techniques for the observation, notation and evaluation of children's speech;

2. a better knowledge of the various functions of language, their frequency and their relative importance;

3. a knowledge of the mental powers used in verbal activity;

4. a range of different pedagogical techniques for provoking and stimulating speech activities at different levels of elaboration and complexity, in an atmosphere which as far as possible preserves spontaneity. Which is to say that although systematic exercises must sometimes be introduced, they must always be very short and take the form of stimulating and motivated games;

5. rudiments of comparative linguistics to enable them to understand and avoid possible conflicts between different language systems.

The tendency of teachers to concentrate on the language problem means that most of them ask that the families speak French at home and are irritated when the family refuses. This practice is deplorable on many counts:

- if the family acquiesces, the child's communication world is disturbed and impoverished and mother and child feel frustrated in their emotional exchanges;

- if the French spoken in the family is bad, this gives the child no help at school, indeed, quite the contrary;

- if the family refuses, it is because it feels that its integrity is affected and this does not contribute to creating an atmosphere of trust between family and school;

Pressure of this kind is not the most conducive to learning the language of the host environment. On the other hand, when all has been done to help the child to feel accepted for himself, to feel loved and wanted (and not only himself but also his family) the time arrives when he enters of his own accord into the new world of language which he finds in the school. If this sort of atmosphere prevails, the foreign child's first words are often a great pleasure for the whole school, children and adults alike.

It is only then, and not before, that the specific problems of mastering the French language arise.

C. II. Personnel in pre-school institutions

1. Teaching staff

Nursery and infant classes are in charge of teachers who are paid by the state and come under the Ministry of Education. The headmistresses of nursery schools must have had at least five years' experience of nursery or infant classes.

Initial training is given in teacher training schools which do not make any distinction between students who will go on to teach in an elementary or in a nursery school and these teachers may change from one level to another in the course of their careers.

These students receive two years' professional training after the baccalaureat. At present, university level is required with a view to a reform of initial training. After a few years' service, teachers who wish to do so may follow courses for one or two years in specialised centres in order to qualify as teachers of handicapped children, as re-educators in psychopedagogy or in psycho-motricity or as school psychologists.

A certain number of persons who have the baccalaureat diploma are engaged to replace teachers on leave. After a few years of very inadequate training, particularly in theory they are taken on to the teaching staff proper.

All teachers, whatever their initial training, get further training at courses in the teachers' training schools or on-the-spot through lectures, study circles, working meetings, visits to classes, specialised courses etc.

These activities are run jointly by the directors and teachers of the teacher training schools, the departmental inspectors of education and the pedagogical advisers. They can get help from specialists, university professors and the National Institute for Pedagogical Research and Documentation (INRDP), which has decentralised regional and departmental centres for pedagogical research and documentation. These centres can provide teachers with documentation, audio-visual apparatus and teaching materials. They also possess all the publications of the Research Service.

Some of this research is carried out in class with the participation of teachers; various categories of staff being responsible for their training as well as research workers.

2. Auxiliary staff in nursery and infant schools

This category consists of municipal employees called "specialised nursery school staff" who do not require any qualification. They must, however, be approved by the headmistress and, if they do day-nursery duty outside school hours, by the Academy Inspector. They obtain their training through practice and contact with the teachers. They should be given basic training, since they help to look after the children and to attend to their physical needs.

3. Foreign staff

Under agreements concluded between France and the immigration countries, qualified teachers from the countries of origin may teach their national language to the children from these countries in French elementary schools. They do not work in pre-school establishments and the desirability of this practice, which is highly controversial, remains to be studied. Foreign staff is therefore very rarely seen in nursery schools, because the teachers, being civil servants, must be French and because the specialised staff are increasingly established staff of the municipal administration.

It does occur, however, that some of the adults in the school come from a naturalised foreign family or have had contacts with foreign countries. It seems that such persons are very helpful because they are naturally familiar with these problems (see Appendix III).

4. Information and training of staff in the problems of migrant workers' children

The measures so far taken by the Ministry of Education or other bodies, which are still few in number, have not greatly affected pre-school education.

Courses and colloquoys have been run for teachers in charge of entry classes for foreign children and for training staff (departmental inspectors, teach training school directors and staff, pedagogical advisers) and sometimes also for foreign teachers, social workers and leaders of migrants' associations. The Ministry and the Inspectorates have called on bodies which have had a long experience of teaching French as a foreign language (CREDIF, BELC) or in the training of migrants (IRFED etc).

The Ministry is now setting up, in the teacher training schools in districts where the needs are greatest, information and training centres for staff concerned with the schooling of migrant workers' children. One is already fully operative and provides courses for French and foreign teachers. There are a few institutes at university level which specialise in these problems (Grenoble, Nice).

A certain number of books on these problems have been published by various organisations or associations.

In some departments, an inspector and a pedagogical adviser specialise in these questions and advise teachers of classes with a high proportion of foreign children.

On the whole, nursery school teachers feel very little need at the moment to take training courses on this subject. They are not always conscious of needing information on the following points:

- information on the problem of migrant workers in general and migration phenomena;
- knowledge of the living conditions of migrant workers in the region or district where they teach;
- knowledge of the world of labour in the region or district;
- information on the organisations which are concerned with migrant workers, in order to be able to give useful advice to the families which bring their problems to them;
- information on the culture, customs, religions and ways of life of the peoples whose children attend the school, and on the main economic and social data of these countries compared with those of the host country. They might be provided with a list of works which can give them an introduction to the understanding of these cultures;
- knowledge of the school systems of the countries from which the children originate;
- information on the particular situation of the children's families thanks to contacts with the reception services and welfare officers;
- information on individual children; they have rarely attended school before, but it is important that the mistress should know what their past lives have been, what is their usual behaviour, their health problems, etc;
- rudiments of the languages of their pupils.

Some teachers should take part in research on the pedagogical methods most suitable to the needs of these children.

C. III. Material environment

The building standards for nursery schools are laid down by the Ministry of Education (see Appendix IV).

Existing schools, some of which are very old, do not always conform with the standards.

Toys and teaching material are not imposed, the choice depending generally on the headmistresses, but furniture and teaching material must have the prior approval of the Ministry of Education.

For the construction of governmental or departmental public schools, a subsidy is accorded to the municipalities, which also bear the cost of equipment, the functioning of classes as well as of the upkeep of buildings and the salaries of auxiliary staff. As a result, schools are more or less well equipped according to locality, and nursery schools in rural districts find it difficult to provide for expansion. We would therefore recommend that more assistance be given to the poorer municipalities.

There is no special teaching material for migrant workers' children at the pre-school level. Experiments with special classes have, in general, not proved satisfactory at this level and these children are put together with the others and use the same equipment.

C. IV. Use of the mass media for informing the public, teachers and parents: special programme for migrant children

In France, radio and television have so far been little used for providing a better reception for immigrant workers.

There have been occasional broadcasts for teachers on socio-economic, linguistic and pedagogical problems.

For the families, the radio has for several years given between 6 and 7 very short broadcasts every morning (except Sunday) in Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Yugoslav and Turkish. For the past few months, television programmes prepared by the television authorities of the Arab countries are broadcast every Sunday for half an hour. At the initiative of the Secretariat of State for Emigrants, another half hour has recently been devoted to immigration problems; it is addressed to both French and foreign listeners. A television series is in preparation for children dealing with France as a host country. Negotiations are in progress with the radio authorities for the preparation of new broadcasts.

When foreign countries are evoked in ordinary radio and television broadcasts they are usually seen in relation to an outstanding topical event, which does not always make for a true image of the country and its culture. This can only help to strengthen racial prejudice. It would therefore be in the interests both of the general culture of the French and the national culture of the immigrants that the mass media should broadcast, at peak listening periods, serious programmes accessible to all, which give a true picture of the culture of the various immigration countries.

With regard to the particular problems of pre-school education, we should like to see broadcasts:

1. for mothers, in their language, giving advice on household hygiene, the education of young children at home, the social and medical services on which they can call, the role and functioning of pre-school establishments, the preventive role of the GAPP and the French educational system;

2. for French and foreign children, dealing with school life in foreign countries, children's games in other lands, their family life, films featuring young foreign "heroes" with whom every child can identify;

3. for teachers, on the life and culture of foreign countries, on the schools and school systems of the immigration countries, on the school problems of foreign children (programmes which can help them if necessary to change their educational attitudes and to find solutions to their problems);

4. for the general public, giving information which shows how important it is for these young children to attend pre-school establishments.

D. I. Psycho-pedagogical advisory bodies for staff, parents, and the school authorities

In 1970, the Ministry of Education set up in school groups with a pupil population of about 800 to 1,000 flexible structures designed to detect and reduce or eliminate the various handicaps which might jeopardise the development of the child and his adaptation to school life. These "Psycho-Pedagogic Aid Groups" (GAPP) are composed of a school psychologist assisted by re-educators specialising in psycho-pedagogics or psycho-motricity. They do their work during school hours and parents and teachers are kept informed of what is done in the way of re-education or pedagogic support, and, if necessary, are given useful advice for their own educational work in the classroom or in the home.

When they were first instituted, the tendency of the GAPPs was to concentrate on the primary school, where the symptoms of inadaptation are the most evident and also no doubt because the specialists on these bodies usually have more experience of elementary schools than of nursery schools. It was soon realised, however, that prevention is better than cure and the specialists are now urged to intervene at the earliest possible stage, that is to say in the nursery school. There are, however, at present, far too few of these specialists to cover all the needs.

The child of a migrant worker may suffer from a sensory or organic handicap like any other child. But the simple fact of not mastering the French language should not mean that he is put in the category of the maladjusted who need specialised teaching. But because these children often come from under-privileged families, they suffer, in addition to the specific difficulties of foreign children, from the same handicaps as are found among the children from equivalent socio-economic strata. As a result, the work done by a GAPP at nursery school level can be a very appreciable factor in helping migrant workers' children to fit smoothly into the French school world.

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The work of the GAPP is co-ordinated with that of the medico-social services of the School Health and the Maternal and Child Protection authorities. There are medico-scholastic centres for sectors of between five and six thousand pupils, consisting of a doctor assisted by two social workers, two nurses and a medico-social secretary. These services, too, are far from being sufficiently well staffed to operate everywhere with the necessary efficiency. At pre-school level health checks are carried out at three and five years old, at which parents and teachers are consulted and advised. At present, although the check-up at five years old is usually carried out, lack of staff does not always make it possible to carry out the check-up of the three-year-olds.

When the child has difficulties which cannot be solved directly by the above-mentioned personnel, two types of board intervene according to whether solutions can or cannot be found within the school system.

The child may either be kept for an extra year in the nursery school or sent to a special class for foreign children or he may be referred to specialists or advisory or educational establishments under the control of the Ministry of Health.

In addition, some children have to be taken away from their families because the conditions for their upbringing are unsatisfactory. Sad to say, the majority of cases dealt with by the Children's Assistance Board are those of migrant workers' children.

The GAPPs seem to us to work very well. It is to be hoped that they will, as soon as possible, become operative everywhere, even in rural districts. Priority should be given to sectors where there is a high proportion of foreigners and in these sectors the number of pupils for which the GAPP is responsible should be reduced. In places where the GAPPs do not yet exist and where the needs are greatest, an "open" adaptation section might be created in the nursery school under the charge of a teacher who has been prepared for this work. These classes take in rotation small groups of children who need special help. At the moment there are very few of these adaptation sections in nursery schools.

All GAPP personnel should be particularly familiar with the problems of foreign children and be closely associated with all the pedagogical research carried out in this field.

## D. II. Forms of co-ordination between the different responsible bodies and all those interested in pre-school for migrants' children

In France, regional centres of the National Immigration Office deal with the social, technical and health aspects of the entry of families; the departmental centres are only concerned with health inspection.

In all departments there is also an Emigrant Welfare Service which is the French branch of the International Welfare Service. It is an officially recognised private association, which concludes labour conventions with the various municipalities.

All these services are understaffed and have difficulty in meeting all the requirements. Alongside them are a very large number of private associations with social and cultural aims.

The municipalities should be better informed of the problems of migrant workers and should have a cordial reception service. The existing services, national, regional or departmental, are often too distant and too administrative-minded to be effective, even if numerous associations of compatriots often help to make up for their shortcomings. But although compatriots may introduce the friendly atmosphere that is needed, they are not always sufficiently well-informed of the aid which the families can obtain.

In the preceding chapter, we spoke of the forms of co-ordination between the various bodies which operate within the school system or in close liaison with it. Since the end of 1975 all the official services of a department are co-ordinated under the aegis of the Directorate for Health and Social Action. Private associations do not sit on this committee, not even the Emigrants Welfare Service. There is, however, some unofficial co-ordination through personal contacts.

Better co-operation should be established between, on the one hand, the social assistant of the basic sector and, on the other, the school assistant and the emigrants' assistant. All these persons belong to different services and the last two serve as intermediaries, one with the headmistress of the nursery school and the other one with the migrant workers' families.

Apart from direct and personal contacts with the families, the headmistresses of nursery schools should be infromed by the social services of the socio-economic and cultural level of the emigrants' families, whether they feel that their emigration has been a failure or a success, of the living conditions and working hours, of their health language and school problems. In all school districts there should be someone with particular experience of these problems in constant contact with the people who deal with the migrants.

The lack of co-ordination between the social services is a general complaint apart from the specific problem with which we are here concerned. It was therefore proposed a few years ago, with a view to the better education and protection of the young child and greater participation of the family, to create bodies well integrated into a small-scale community in which the various services devoted to children would be grouped together with multi-disciplinary teams working in close co-operation (family planning, pre- and post-natal consultation, collective and family day-nurseries, family aid, welfare officers, medico-psycho-pedagogical services, day-nurseries and leisure centres, pre-school education establishments). In districts where

there are a large number of migrant workers, these bodies should be in contact with the associations and services concerned with foreigners.

The presence of foreign welfare officers who would visit homes would be particularly effective.

E. On-going and future research

At the nursery school level, very little research has been done on this problem, although a certain number of experiments and schemes have been carried out.

We only know of the following:

1. "Survey in nursery schools on children from the Maghreb and their families" (May 1974 - February 1975), published by the Centre for African Studies and Documentation in conjunction with "Immigration and Co-operation" of Grenoble - Director, Jacques Champion.

2. Research on the socialisation channels among migrant workers' children in nursery schools by the School Psychology Laboratory of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and the René Descartes University, by Mrs Gratiot-Alphandery, Director, and Mrs A Montes (to be published towards the end of 1976).

3. The work of Mrs Berthoz-Proux of the Research Centre for Specialised Education and School Adaptation (CRESAS-INRDP) on the linguistic interactions between French and their language of origin among the children of migrant workers in the nursery school (several articles published in 1975 in "L'éducation enfantine" published by Nathan).

4. The work in progress at Petit Nanterre by Mr Salines, Departmental Inspector of Education and Miss M Garabédian on the link between the nursery and elementary school for migrant workers' children (CREDIF).

5. Finally, the Ministry of Education (Schools Directorate) recently commissioned the INRDP to make a descriptive and critical study of migrant workers' children in the nursery school. This study was in particular to bring out the position regarding verbal communication on arrival at, and on departure from, the nursery school and ways and means of maintaining better links with the environment of origin.

# A P P E N D I X I

## Commentary on the variables referred to in Chapter C

### 1. Social, economic and cultural level of the families

The nursery school sometimes takes in children who do not speak French but belong to foreign families of medium or high social level or to French families which have adopted them (as, for example, some Vietnamese children). These children generally adapt without difficulty; they learn the language quickly and if they have any problems they are the ordinary parent-relationship ones. These problems can be aggravated by transplantation but they are entirely different from the problems of migrant workers' children from families of very modest means living in conditions that are often extremely difficult.

### 2. Degree of integration of families in the host environment

When foreign families have been settled for some time in the district, the behaviour of their children at school tends to be little different from that of French children. The degree of integration does not only depend on the length of stay but also, and perhaps above all, on the attitude of the immigrant or migrant families towards the host country, whether it is open-minded and positive or whether the families refuse to accept the new life, withdraw into their shells and want only to get back as soon as possible to the countries they came from.

### 3. Degree of mastery of the mother tongue and how rich the language is

The difficulties which the child will have in mastering the language spoken at the school will depend on whether or not he is born in the host country, how correctly the language used in the home is spoken and how close the structure of that language (or languages) is to French. Learning the school language may have good or less good effects on the mother tongue which, at that age, is still being acquired.

### 4. Whether the child is an older or younger one

In some families in which the older children have had difficulties at school, it is noticeable that the younger ones adapt very easily and turn out to be good pupils. The great effort of adaptation which has been made by the older children makes it easier for the younger ones to integrate into the school environment.

5. Age of entry into the nursery school

It seems that North African families are less inclined to send their children to the nursery school at an early age than families from the countries of South-West Europe. Some teachers complain of irregular attendance, others say that attendance is very good. In general, they are all in favour of early entrance and regret the fact that lack of room sometimes prevents them admitting children between 2 and 3 years old; the earlier the age at which the child enters the nursery school the easier is his adaptation to the French school system and the better his chances of a normal elementary education in France.

6. The length of the day spent at the nursery school

The uniformity of the French system means that every child between the ages of 2 and 11 attends school for 6 hours a day. Where there is a school meals service between morning and afternoon classes, as is often the case, children who eat at school are there for two hours longer. Finally, children who use the day-nursery in the morning and after classes may spend as many as ten hours a day at the school.

In this way, the foreign child is subject to the influence of the French educational environment for a very variable period depending in part on whether the mother works and what her family obligations are. Some teachers would like the school's influence on the foreign children to be increased as much as possible. In particular, they try to get them to eat at school, because they consider that the family's diet is ill-balanced, that it is not suitable to the climate and that table manners are not observed. Certain dietary taboos, the cost of meals (which, though often low enough, are still too high for the family budget), and the fear of the school's exercising too much influence, mean that the family is often wary. We touch here on the delicate problem of imposing particular forms of life and education which we consider to be superior.

7. The surrounding milieu

In schools with working class pupils, the children of migrant workers seem less different than when the other children come from the privileged classes and the problem of their integration into the group will vary accordingly. Studies carried out, particularly among older children, have shown moreover that some of the problems migrant workers' children have at school are not unlike those of children of the underprivileged classes.

8. Diversity of ethnic groups and their proportion of the total

Behaviour and adaptability vary from one ethnic group to another. But here again it is difficult to generalise since all the different factors are constantly at work and may affect

behaviour patterns which would appear to be a general characteristic. The majority of French teachers think they have more difficulty with Algerian or Turkish children, for reasons which we shall refer to later, but they are not unanimous.

The role of the mother, which differs according to nationality, is an important factor in the way in which the child makes his way at nursery school. For example, Algerian women to not work, go out very little and have few contacts with the school. The Italian, Spanish and Portuguese mothers work more often, work as cleaners, get to know other women and are invited to French homes. This causes changes whose effects are soon visible in the behaviour of the children in the nursery school.

When a nationality is clearly in the majority, this sometimes leads to these children splitting up into groups among themselves in the playground or play corners and this tendency may be strengthened when the children all live in a council or transit housing estate and get together outside school hours.

9. Seniority and stability of teaching staff

It is very difficult for a new school with a fresh staff that does not yet know the families to take in a large proportion of foreign children of several nationalities. In some very poor districts, the instability of the teaching staff perpetuates this situation from year to year.

10. Proportion of foreign children in the school.

It may vary from none at all to 80% or more, so creating qualitatively very different situations, though it is not possible to speak of a "threshold of tolerance". The nursery schools which have the greatest difficulties are not always those which have the largest proportion of foreign children, but rather perhaps those with an average number. There are headmistresses who say: "In my school there are no problems, because we have very few foreign children and they are very quickly integrated". But there are also headmistresses who say: "We have no problems here because we have always had a very high proportion of foreign children. These children feel at home here. We are accustomed to them and to their families". It would seem, therefore, that the large numbers have influenced the school, which has adjusted itself to them. It is understandable therefore that the greatest difficulties may be felt where there are averagely large numbers of foreign children, so that it is impossible not to be aware of the problem but where it is not so great that the need is felt to adjust to it or there has been time to do so.

We would note, however, that the quality of spoken French is not taken into account in these replies, which only refer to the general functioning and the atmosphere of the school. What the teachers want most is a reductionin the number of children under their charge, a reduction which they think should be greater the bigger the proportion of foreign children concerned.

# A P P E N D I X II

## Recorded remarks

"Since they learn cleanliness later than French children (underwear, nose, meals), they are made fun of by their comrades and sometimes cause irritation to adults". "There is no difference if the physical appearance is presentable, otherwise the other children shy away". "Helper staff complain about the way in which the child is dressed". "The teacher's enthusiasm is sometimes dampened by the child's bad appearance" etc.

# A P P E N D I X III

## Remarks concerning the employment of foreign staff in the school

"In 1965 I had a teacher repatriated from Algeria who helped me to understand certain psychological characteristics of Algerians. She contributed to the removal of differences" (10% of foreign children). "The presence of an English woman helper is particularly beneficial. She wins the children over by her kindness, particularly the foreign children" (8% of foreign children). "The teachers would agree to having women helpers of North African origin in the school. We had a Hindu woman helper and the children were very fond of her"(40% of foreign children).

In schools (the majority) which have not employed any foreign staff, there is some worry about the possibility, or contradictory views are expressed: "If a child feels that he is being well cared for by a foreign helper or gives his full trust to a teacher of foreign origin, this gets him into the habit very early on of judging people on their real human qualities and not by their nationality (27% of foreign children). "If these children are going to live in France, it would be a bad thing and not conducive to good integration to leave them in contact with staff from their countries of origin, since these children already have a strong tendency to follow their native customs so that there is a danger of counter-adaptation" (40% of foreign children).

This quotation shows the difficulties which may be raised by the introduction of foreign teachers in French classes and how necessary it is to provide them in advance with the necessary information so that they are conscious of the various aspects of the matter.

# A P P E N D I X IV

## Premises

Nursery schools consist of classrooms, measuring 60 $m^2$ (for groups of 35 to 40 children), a rest room, wash room, play room, headmistress's office, an entrance/waiting room, cloakroom, kitchen/workroom, cupboards (the total surface depending on the number of classes), equipped outside areas. In large schools, a mistresses' commonroom, sometimes a dining room and a covered shelter.

Infant classes require a classroom, a play room which can also be used as a rest room and an appropriate cloakroom/ wash room.